



Discovery, Secret, and Home

Location: Southwest Guatemala

Weather Conditions: 86 degrees Fahrenheit, Humidity 45%, Rain 50%

Day 7: Base Camp, King Ixtua's Tomb, 11:05 AM The

past few days had been a flurry of activity, with Evan assisting Uncle Phillip, Max, and Grace to take pictures and measurements, draw sketches, and weigh artifacts. Evan had never had this much fun in his life. He had taken part in opening King Ixtua's tomb and discovering the king's burial chamber.

Evan sat enjoying a cold drink in the tent and stared at the massive collection of photographs that had been pinned up on every imaginable surface. Uncle Phillip sat across from him, enjoying a drink and a break from the heat.

"Well, Evan, have you enjoyed your time here?" asked Uncle Phillip.

Evan looked at his uncle with a shocked look on his face. "Are you *kidding*?" he replied. "All I want to know is where do we find another tomb?"

Uncle Phillip laughed. "I wish it were that easy. But I do have something you might find interesting," he said.

Evan watched as his uncle placed a small scroll on the table and nodded for Evan to take a look.

Evan picked up the scroll and unrolled it. The small surface was covered with a small number of Mayan glyphs. "What is this? What does it say?" asked Evan.

"That is a scroll that we found inside King Ixtua's sarcophagus. The fact that it wasn't in the king's library makes it something special. Grace has the better translation skills, so I've asked her to come and join us, but if that scroll contains what I think it does, you may get your wish," replied Uncle Phillip.

Evan stared back at the scroll. He carefully rolled it back up and placed it on the table.

"Uncle Phillip, this has been the best summer I've ever had," said Evan. "I don't think I've told you yet, but thanks for inviting me."

The tent flap separated and Grace entered carrying some books and a camera.

Uncle Phillip smiled. "Evan, you're welcome. But I have to say, if you had *not* come along, I don't honestly know if we would have been able to continue. So let me thank you for making the trip."

Grace nodded and set the items on the table. "Yeah, Evan. Max and I are really happy you came along, too. None of us has the proper skills to train a monkey," she said with a smile.

"Have a seat, Grace," said Uncle Phillip. "Evan and I were just talking about this little scroll here. Can you take a look?"

Grace unrolled the scroll and studied it for a moment. She opened one of the books on the table and spent a few more seconds searching for something. She flipped a few more pages and then suddenly stood up. "This is unbelievable!" she yelled.

Uncle Phillip laughed out loud. "I thought so!" he replied.

"What is it?" asked Evan. Grace and Uncle Phillip were laughing together. Evan found himself laughing with the group.

Max stuck his head in the tent. "What's all the noise in here?" he asked, looking at Evan.

Evan shrugged. "I have no idea."

"Sit down, Max. I'll let Grace explain," said Uncle Phillip.

Max and Grace both sat down and Evan looked over at Grace. She held up the scroll and pointed at a small glyph. "I know we were laughing, but this is not the punch line to a joke," she said. "This symbol right here is 'quetz'la'ki,' which translates to king's treasure."

Max looked at Grace and then at Uncle Phillip. "Let me get this straight. Are you telling me that's a treasure map?"

Uncle Phillip nodded with a smile. "I wasn't certain until Grace translated, but I do recognize the other symbols as measurements and natural landmarks," he said.

Grace pointed at some more symbols. "This scroll contains directions from this tomb to the location of King Ixtua's treasure repository."

"Are we all going to be rich?" asked Evan.

Uncle Phillip patted Evan on the back. "Not a chance, Evan. Anything we find belongs to the government of Guatemala. And that's assuming this repository hasn't already been found and looted," he replied.

"But if it hasn't?" Max asked.

"Well, as the team that discovered its location, the Guatemalan government will give us complete access and allow us to catalogue anything we find. But remember, the historical data from the scrolls and artifacts in King Ixtua's tomb is going to keep us busy for years," said Uncle Phillip.

Evan looked at his uncle, a little confused. "I have a question. Do you think the repository has traps like the king's tomb?"

"I'm absolutely certain of it," replied Grace. "This scroll matches the ones we have that were written by Tupaxu. Knowing Tupaxu, the repository probably has even more complex traps."

"Well, I have to go back in a few days and start school," said Evan. "I'll be happy to leave my robotics kit, but I don't think I'll have time to explain everything about it."

Uncle Phillip leaned forward and looked at Evan. "We probably won't be able to start looking for this repository for five or six months. And we have another six months' of paperwork to fill out for the Guatemalan government for King Ixtua's tomb. Trust me, Evan. We won't be able to tackle the repository for at least a year," he said.

Evan smiled. "Are you saying what I think you're saying?"

"Yes, Evan," said Uncle Phillip. "I think it's a safe bet that we might need your expertise again next summer if we find King Ixtua's treasure room. Think you might be interested?"

"Are you serious?" yelled Evan. "The only problem I can think of is all my friends will want to come along. I have two friends, Jeff and Katelyn, who have robotics kits, too."

“Well, let’s take it one step at a time. You’ve got school and we’ve got a lot of paperwork to complete and reports to write. We’ll stay in touch with you during the year, and if everything works out, maybe you can join us next summer if we find the repository,” said Uncle Phillip, standing up. “Now, how about we have a nice lunch together and talk more about this treasure room.”

Max, Grace, and Evan all nodded.

“Okay, then,” said Uncle Phillip. “Lunch is on me. Grilled vegetables and lemonade in the next tent. Let’s go.”

Evan stood with the team, his mind racing with images of what kinds of traps and challenges the king’s treasure room would contain. He also had a new idea for a bot that he planned on designing on the flight home. It was going to be a busy school year. He made a promise to himself to study more for his history class and walked out of the tent.

THE END?